

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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News Release



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Public Input Invited for Environmental Impact Statement On Migratory Bird Hunting

Meeting scheduled for April 26, 2006, in Sacramento, California

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has published a notice inviting public comment and participation as a part of the scoping process in drafting a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) on the hunting of migratory birds. Comments can be sent directly to the Service or provided at a dozen scoping meetings to be held around the country.

“Migratory bird management is a key mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,” said Service Director H. Dale Hall. “This National Environmental Policy Act process will ensure that all voices are heard as we further our Nation’s migratory bird hunting tradition and examine its role as a wildlife management tool.”

The Service invites Federal and State Agencies and the public to present their views on the scope and substance of an SEIS, options or alternatives to be considered and important management issues. The SEIS will update the 1975 EIS and 1988 SEIS for issuing of annual hunting regulations.

In the Pacific Region, a scoping meeting is scheduled in Sacramento, California, on April 26, 2006, at 7 p.m. in the the California Department of Fish and Game's Resource Building Auditorium. It is one of 12 scoping meetings held around the nation in March and April.

Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act, the Secretary of the Interior has the authority to determine whether migratory bird hunting can take place and issue regulations to guide management. Migratory game birds are species designated in conventions between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia.

The draft SEIS -- which will contain management alternatives -- will be published for comment next year. The notice of the public scoping process was published in the March 9, 2006, volume of the Federal Register.

Written comments regarding SEIS scoping are due by May 30, 2006, to Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, MS MBSP-4107-ARLSQ, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240. Alternately, comment may be sent by fax to (703) 358-2217 or by e-mail to <huntingseis@fws.gov>. All comments received from the initiation of this process on September 8, 2005, (when the Service published a Notice of Intent to prepare a SEIS) until May 30, 2006, will be considered.

The Service regulates the hunting of waterfowl, cranes, rails, snipe and woodcock and doves and pigeons. Regulations governing seasons and limits are created annually since bird populations change from year to year. These “annual” regulations have been written by the Service each year since 1918. Other regulations, termed “basic” regulations such as those governing hunting methods, are changed only when a need to do so arises.

In the September 8, 2005, Federal Register, the Service provided information on the current process for establishing sport hunting regulations, the tribal regulations process, the Alaska subsistence process, and past NEPA considerations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.